

KITTEN CARE



Well done !!! Now that you have a new member of the family you need to know some important things to make sure that they will live a long, happy and contented life.

1. Vaccinations

We routinely vaccinate cats against *Feline Enteritis* and the two main viruses that cause *Cat Flu*. This vaccination is called an 'F4'. These diseases have debilitating effects on cats and in severe cases can cause death. Vaccinations are the best protection we can offer your pet.

A new vaccination that we offer is the FIV vaccine. FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus) acts similarly to HIV, however cannot cause illness to humans. We strongly advise owners to vaccinate their cats against this disease if you plan to allow your cats to spend any time outside.

Another vaccination available for cats protects against *Feline Leukaemia* (FeLV). FeLV is a relatively rare virus in Australia and is spread by bodily secretions, such as saliva. If your cat will be spending time outside and is at a higher risk of contracting the disease from the feral cat population vaccination would be recommended.

Our vaccination protocol is as follows:

6-8 weeks:	F4 (Feline Rhinotracheitis Virus, Calicivirus, Panleucopenia Virus and Chlamydia psittaci) +/- FIV
12-14 weeks:	F4 +/- FIV
16-18 weeks:	F4 +/- FIV

Yearly boosters are essential to continue this protection.

Kittens should be isolated from other cats of unknown health status until 7 days after their third vaccination. However your kitten can play with other cats that are fully vaccinated and healthy, provided they stay in the backyard.

Cats rarely have a reaction to vaccinations. Some may show signs of tenderness at the site of the injections, are a little tired from their trip to the vet or may not eat their next meal. If you have any concerns after their vaccinations do not hesitate to call us.

2. Microchip

Microchip implants and council registration is compulsory in all cats acquired after 1st July 1999. Microchips are an essential way of identifying lost cats and it is important that new kittens be chipped. If you are not sure about the status of your kitten we can scan it for you. We recommend microchipping at time of desexing.

3. Worming

Intestinal worms are a common problem seen in kittens as they can be transferred from their mothers or picked up from their environment. We can offer you worming medications to protect against the common gastrointestinal parasites: Roundworm, Hookworm and Tapeworm.

Our worming protocol is listed below:

Every 2 weeks until 12 weeks of age,
Then monthly until 6 months,
Then every 3 months for life.

The ideal worming for kittens under 3 months is FELEX PLUS ALL WORMER PASTE. After this time we recommend using POPANTEL ALL WORMER FOR CATS or FELEX PLUS ALL WORMER PASTE.

4. Heartworm

While there is evidence suggestion that heartworm is becoming prevalent in cats in Australia, it is uncommon, occurring at about 1/10th the rate of dogs. If you are concerned about heartworm in your cat, please speak to one of our vets.

5. Desexing

If you are not interested in breeding with your cat then we advise you have them desexed. We recommend that this surgery be done at 6 months of age. Desexing will prevent any problems in the future such as unwanted pregnancies, infection, undesirable hormonal problems, and greatly reduces the risk of mammary, testicular, and prostatic cancers.

Undesexed male cats have a tendency to spray urine and mark their territory. They also roam and often find themselves fighting with other cats. This can lead to abscess formation (which can be expensive to treat, and very painful for your cat), and is also the method that FIV (Feline AIDS) and FeLV is spread.

For all these reasons, we strongly recommend desexing your cat.

6. Diet

Cats are very similar to humans in that they require a well balanced diet. This can be easily achieved by feeding commercial dry food such as Science Diet®.

It is not uncommon for cats to have gingivitis, which is a painful inflammation of the gums. The best way to maintain healthy teeth and gums is to offer RAW chicken wings or RAW chicken necks given four times weekly or large slices of raw meat.

If you are changing your kitten's diet or introducing a new food it is crucial that you do it gradually, combining it with the old food over a couple of days to avoid a 'tummy upset' and diarrhoea.

7. Fleas and Ticks

Fleas are a very frustrating problem for cats AND owners, but can be easily prevented with topical applicators or sprays. For each flea you see on your cat, there will be 50-100 of them in the environment (in the bedding, carpet and on the grass). Some cats can be allergic to the saliva of the flea and will chew themselves repeatedly, often causing infections to occur in the skin. Therefore it is important to try and stop this situation from arising by using effective prevention.

To achieve this, we recommend all year round flea control, not just when you see fleas on your cat. Indeed, most cats will harbour a large number of fleas before any are noticeable at all!

Ticks are also becoming more apparent particularly after trips to coastal areas. Certain ticks cause paralysis and death so it is important to check your animal regularly and use prevention.

FRONTLINE spray and topical applicators are the best option for flea and tick prevention. ADVANTAGE is another good spot-on that covers fleas and is the safest use in young kittens. REVOLUTION is another spot-on that effectively kills fleas. All of these products will actively kill fleas for 1 month. Regular cleaning of the environment is also required to control the fleas in your environment.

8. Insurance

Ever thought of how good it would be to have Medicare for your pet? Well, now it exists. There are a few pet health insurance schemes available but the one we recommend is from AFS PetMed. It provides lifetime cover and also covers, for the first time, maintenance costs such as vaccination, flea and worm treatments, desexing and microchipping. A flyer is enclosed to give you a brief overview.

We wish you the best of luck with your new kitten and we hope that you share many happy and healthy years ahead.